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The Varieties of Theism and the Openness of God

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The Varieties of Theism and the Openness of God: Charles Hartshorne and Free-Will Theism

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In late February 1981, Charles Hartshorne visited the University of Oklahoma where I was, at the time, a graduate student. I showed Hartshorne a copy of an article about him in the school newspaper in which his book *The Divine Relativity* was called "The Divine Reality." Pointing at the error he remarked, "There is only one mistake in this article. Any number of authors have talked about the divine reality. How many have seriously considered the divine relativity?"

Charles Hartshorne may well be remembered as the twentieth century's greatest representative of process theology. A distinctive characteristic of Hartshorne's approach to philosophical theology is his attempts to exhaust the possible meanings of the concept of God in arguing for his own version of process theism. It is surprising, therefore, that a number of Christian philosophers in recent years allege that process theists—and by implication, Hartshorne—tend to argue from a nonexhaustive disjunction between classical theism of the Augustinian-Thomistic variety and process theism (Nash, *Concept,* 30; Nash, *Process,* 21; Craig, 149; Pinnock et al., 9). Some of these critics call the alternative that they believe is being ignored "the open view

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of God," "classical free-will theism," "basic free-will theism," or simply "free-will theism" (Basinger, *Case*).

One purpose of this paper is to summarize the basic similarities and differences among classical theism, free-will theism, and process theism. We shall see that free-will theists artificially distance themselves from process theists by using the expression "the open view of God" to describe their position. The doctrine of the openness of God is precisely *the shared content* of free-will theism and process theism. A second aim is to trace Hartshorne's thinking about the logically possible concepts of God and thereby defuse the criticism that he commits the fallacy of false alternatives. Finally, I will examine Hartshorne's case against the tenets of free-will theism with which he disagrees—creation *ex nihilo* and the concept of omnipotence as it relates to theodicy. My concluding remarks touch on the epistemological chasm separating Hartshorne from most free-will theists.[2]

Classical Theism, Free-will Theism, and Process Theism

The three forms of theism under consideration share the assumption that the divine reality is free of imperfection. This means, at a minimum, that God's existence is not subject to change, that God is never born and never dies. It is also agreed that the perfection of deity includes perfection with respect to creative power, goodness, and knowledge of what goes on in the universe. Behind these basic points of agreement, however, there are equally significant disagreements.

Classical theists, following arguments from Plato and Aristotle and with questionable scriptural support, believe that perfection precludes any principle of potency.[3] In the words of Thomas Aquinas, in whose philosophy

2. My project is similar to Daniel Dombrowski's. Dombrowski's aim is to initiate a dialogue between Hartshorne and analytic theists where none exists and to continue the dialogue where it has begun (3, 8). The theists that Dombrowski discusses tend to accept the main tenets of classical theism. Free-will theists, although usually working within the analytic tradition of philosophy, reject classical theism as defined in this paper, and therefore they are not discussed by Dombrowski.

3. Plato's argument for divine immutability is in the *Republic,* bk. 2, 380e–381c; Aristotle's arguments are in *Physics,* bk. 8, chapter 10 and in *Metaphysics,* bk. 12, chapters 6–8; the biblical passages ordinarily used to support lack of change in God are Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, and James 1:17.

classical theism found its nearly definitive statement, ". . . God has no admixture of potency but is pure act" (*Truth* bk.1, 101, SCG 16.5). By virtue of being pure actuality God is unchangeable in all respects (immutable), has no contingent qualities (necessity), is unqualified by time (eternal), lacks parts (simple) and is nonphysical (immaterial). Another consequence of the classical concept of deity is that God is wholly unaffected by worldly processes (impassible). This was usually understood to include the idea that the divine life is devoid of emotion. Again, Aquinas says it most clearly, "the creatures are really related to God," because God is their creator; however, "in God there is no real relation to the creatures . . ." since the creatures can have no power over God (*Basic Writings,* 113, ST Q 13, art. 7). According to classical theism, God creates the universe *ex nihilo*, from no preexisting material. This creativity is categorically different from any creativity in the creatures. Aquinas says that, in the strict sense, "to create can be the proper action of God alone" (*Basic Writings,* 243, ST Q 45, art. 5).

Both free-will theists and process theists take issue with the concept of God as pure act. If classical theism denies all potentiality in God, free-will theists and process theists affirm the contradiction of this, namely, there are some respects in which there is potentiality in God. The potency in God is understood not only as the capacity for self-change, but equally as the ability of the creatures to have effects on God. Whereas classical theists see passivity only as a sign of imperfection, free-will theists and process theists argue for perfect forms of passivity. Hence, God is not impassible in all respects. Hartshorne, writing in 1963, spoke of a "*divine openness to creaturely influence*" (*Wisdom,* 92). Two books by free-will theists, published in 1980 and 1994, echo this sentiment in their shared title, *The Openness of God* (Rice, *God's Foreknowledge*; and Pinnock et al.). It is doubtful that free-will theists would find any room for disagreement in Hartshorne's description of God as "the most and best moved mover" (*Zero Fallacy,* 6, 39).

Both Hartshorne and free-will theists argue that the concept of a God who is affected by creaturely decisions is a more accurate interpretation of the witness of the Bible than classical theism could provide. The self-disclosure of the God of Scripture shows a dramatic personality who issues commands, makes promises, judges, sympathizes with and responds to people. Wisdom, who is the all-powerful and all-seeing manifestation of God,

is described as "mobile beyond all motion" (*Wisdom,* 7.23–24). Moreover, the passages that speak of God as unchanging do not support unqualified immutability. They are clearly referring to God's reliability in keeping promises and of God's steadfast love (Hartshorne, *Man's Vision,* 109–10; Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity,* 25; Rice, *God's Foreknowledge,* 10; Rice, "Biblical Support").

Hartshorne and free-will theists also agree that, while there are respects in which God is passible, there are other respects in which God is impassible. Although God's experiences of and responses to the world change as the world changes, God's existence and character are unaffected by these changes. Hartshorne writes, "That God exists is one with his essence . . . , but how, or in what actual state of experience or knowledge or will, he exists is contingent in the same sense as is our own existence" (*Divine Relativity,* 87).[4] Richard Rice makes the same point nearly forty years later: ". . . God's openness involves only His concrete experience of the creaturely world. It does not apply to either his existence or to His character" (*God's Foreknowledge,* 30). Recently, William Hasker echoed this idea: "God changes—not indeed in his essential nature, his love and wisdom and power and faithfulness, but in his thoughts and deeds toward us and the rest of his creation, matching his thought toward the creature with the creature's actual state at the time God thinks of it" (133). According to Hartshorne and free-will theists, God's experiences of and responses to the world are no less contingent than any non-divine individual's experiences and responses. What sets God apart from the creatures is that God's existence and defining essence are unaffected by worldly changes.

Hartshorne insists on this distinction throughout his writings (cf. *Man's Vision,* 109–11; *Creative Synthesis,* 254–55; *Insights,* 98–99; *Wisdom,* 80; *Zero Fallacy,* 81). He refers to the distinction as the difference between *existence* and *actuality*. Existence is always abstract compared to the particular way in which it is instantiated. Hartshorne argues by way of illustration: "that I shall (at least probably) exist tomorrow is one thing; that I shall exist hearing a blue jay call at noon is another" (*Logic,* 63). By applying this distinction to God, Hartshorne provides the central pillar upon

4. This paper avoids exclusively male pronouns for God, with the exception that quotations from others that use exclusive language are not changed. Early in the 1980s, Hartshorne began using inclusive language for God.

which the coherence of the open view of God rests. There is no contradiction in saying that God is both passible and impassible, mutable and immutable, or contingent and necessary, as long as these contrasts correspond to the actuality and the existence (or essence) of God respectively. No wonder that David Tracy calls this "Hartshorne's discovery" (259; cf. Hartshorne, "God," 304). In a book entitled *Existence and Actuality,* Hartshorne says simply, "I rather hope to be remembered for this distinction" (Cobb and Gamwell, 75).[5]

Free-will theists often use the expressions "the open view of God" and "free-will theism" interchangeably (Pinnock, 320–21; Hasker, 150; Basinger, "Practical Implications," 199). This is misleading insofar as the God of process theism is no less "open," in the sense of being passible, than the God of free-will theism. Schubert Ogden avers that Hartshorne's case for a God open to creaturely influence is arguably his signal contribution to philosophical theology (20). Indeed, the arguments of free-will theists for the open view of God are largely an exercise in retracing steps that Hartshorne took half a century before.

The differences between free-will theism and process theism cluster around the concept of creativity. Free-will theists agree with classical theists that God freely chooses to create the universe *ex nihilo*. God could have chosen not to have a world. Moreover, free-will theists use the expression "free will" to emphasize their view that God created us with wills that not even God could control. This freedom allows us to make significant choices, and it allows God to enter into "dynamic, give-and-take relationships with us" (Pinnock et al., 7). The creative power of God, according to free-will theists, includes the ability to prevent an individual from performing a free action or, if it is performed, to keep it from producing its intended result (Basinger, *Case,* 34). Finally, God has the power to intervene miraculously in the course of nature.

Process theists are opposed to or at least skeptical of most of this picture. For our purposes, we may note that process metaphysics includes two interrelated claims. First, reality has a social structure (Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity,* 26–29). To exist is to exist in relation to others. Second, process metaphysics is a return to the Platonic idea, expressed by the Eleatic

5. Hartshorne uses the existence/actuality distinction in his defense of the ontological argument. According to Hartshorne, "the 'how' of concrete realization [actuality] *never* follows from the essence, even when, as in the divine case, the bare existence, the 'somehow' realized does follow" (*Wisdom,* 80).

stranger, that being is power, the power to affect others and be affected by them (*Sophist,* 247e). Every concrete particular—Whitehead's actual entities or Hartshorne's dynamic singulars—exhibits some degree of this kind of power, which process philosophers call creativity. In Hartshorne's words, "*to be is to create*" (*Creative Synthesis,* 1, 271). The title of Hartshorne's fifth book neatly captures the ideas underlying process metaphysics: *Reality as Social Process.*

In process thought, every creative process involves an element of novelty, but not always in a noticeable degree. The extent of novelty in events ranges from the nearly exact repetition of pattern at the inorganic level to the serendipity of artistic creation at the human level to the unimaginable richness of God's interaction with the world. The divine form of power in process thought is not creation *ex nihilo* but ideal responsiveness to other beings with power. Again, Plato suggests the model (*Timaeus,* 69b–c and *Laws* bk. 10). As the Demiurge elicits order from the chaos of "matter," so the God of process creates cosmic order *ex hyle,* from lesser creative beings already in existence.[6]

Process thinkers do not deny that humans have free will; however, they attribute freedom, in varying degrees, to all concrete particulars. Once the idea of creativity is generalized beyond the human sphere, the idea that God cannot completely determine the will of a free being can likewise be generalized. Free-will theists and process theists agree that God cannot unilaterally guarantee that free beings choose as God would want them to choose. If freedom, or creativity, exists at all levels of reality, then God would never be in a position to insure that the course of events would unfold exactly as God would have it unfold. Free-will theists can say that "God is a risk-taker" (Hasker, 151; Basinger, *Case,* 36). The risk is minimized, however, by God's ability to miraculously alter the natural course of events. In process thought, the dice of God are not loaded. The twin possibilities of tragedy or triumph, even for God, are inherent in existence as such.

We have remarked on the general differences between free-will theism and process theism, but a word is in order about Hartshorne's return to Plato's World-Soul analogy. In *Adventures of Ideas,* Whitehead objected to Plato's analogy as "puerile metaphysics" (116). Hartshorne believes that

6. Lewis Ford argues that the process God might bring some abstract forms into existence *ex nihilo.*

Whitehead objected to the analogy for weak reasons ("Reply," 642). Calling his view *panentheism* (literally, all-in-God), Hartshorne maintains that God includes the universe in a way analogous to how persons include the cells of their bodies. He writes,

> . . . God's volition is related to the world as though every object in it were to him a nerve-*muscle,* and his omniscience is related to it as though every object were a muscle-*nerve.* A brain cell is for us, as it were a nerve-*muscle* and a muscle-*nerve,* in that its internal motions respond to our thoughts, and our thoughts to its motions . . . God has no separate sense organs or muscles, because all parts of the world body directly perform both functions for him. In this sense the world is God's body. (*Man's Vision,* 185)

Free-will theists may accept limited forms of divine embodiment, but Hartshorne's panentheism entails the falsity of their doctrine of the absolute contingency of the world upon God's decision to create it. Daniel Dombrowski neatly summarizes Hartshorne's view when he says that "it makes sense to say both that the cosmos is ensouled and that God is embodied" (86).[7]

There can be no question that classical theism was the dominant tradition throughout most of Christian history. According to Hartshorne, "The Church Fathers, after Philo Judaeus, defined God as unmoved mover, but failed to consider seriously the possibility of other definitions" (*Insights,* 365). Free-will theists do not dispute this statement. Indeed, John Sanders's detailed summary of the history of the concept of God in *The Openness of God* is virtually a commentary on Hartshorne's observation (Sanders). Given the dominance of classical theism, it would not have been surprising if Harts-

7. Karl Krause (1781–1832) first used "panentheism" to describe his view that God includes both nature and humanity while transcending them (Reese, 384). Marcus J. Borg calls his view panentheism: "God is more than everything, even as God is present everywhere. God is all around us and within us, and we are within God" (Borg, 32). Borg claims that his panentheism best captures the Christian understanding of God as both transcendent and immanent. I do not know whether Borg would agree with Hartshorne in accepting the World-Soul analogy. For excellent discussions of early Christian views of divine embodiment, see Paulsen's articles. Two thoughtful contemporary defenses from Christians of divine embodiment are Jantzen and McFague.

horne had ignored the alternative of free-will theism. It would have been accomplishment enough to establish, as Hartshorne attempts to do, that God is not impassible in all respects. Of course, free-will theists can correctly note that a defense of the open view of God is not perforce a defense of process theism. It is this truth, I suspect, in conjunction with a lack of familiarity with Hartshorne's writings, that is at the heart of their criticism that process theists tend to argue from a nonexhaustive disjunction between classical theism and process theism. We shall see that there is no substance to this criticism where Hartshorne is concerned.

Hartshorne and the Varieties of Theism

A theme iterated throughout Hartshorne's writings is that philosophers and theologians have been insufficiently attentive to the logically possible meanings of theism. Without a clear idea of the possible meanings of the concept of God, one is liable to overlook significant alternatives in philosophical theology. Hartshorne attempts to remedy this deficiency in two mutually reinforcing ways. First, he develops formal methods to find classifications of logically exhaustive sets of theistic concepts. Second, he explores the history of philosophy in search of alternative ways of conceptualizing deity. Let us call the first approach conceptual and the second approach historical. Although we shall focus on the conceptual approach, it is worth saying a few words about the historical.

Hartshorne says that the use of arguments found in the history of philosophy is an "essential element in metaphysics, . . . treating the history of philosophy as a laboratory of intellectual experiments in theories, and arguments for or against theories, and in judgments about theories and arguments" ("God," 308). Hartshorne's approach to the history of philosophy is less a history of great thinkers or great systems of thought than a history of great ideas. In this way, he attempts to avoid the criticism he makes of others that "minor points by great philosophers are dealt with, often with loving care, but major points by minor philosophers are missed" (*Creative Synthesis,* 86). This approach is clearly illustrated in *Philosophers Speak of God* (1953), edited with William L. Reese. This book presents selections from the writings of fifty-two philosophers and theologians as well as excerpts from the scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. What sets this anthology apart is the inclusion of philosophers,

both well-known and obscure, from both Eastern and Western traditions. For example, alongside writings by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, and Kant are selections from Ikhnaton, Channing, Ramanuja, Iqbal, and Lequyer.

Hartshorne's approach to the history of philosophy is conducive to discovering ideas about God that have been marginalized or ignored by the regnant tradition. Hartshorne's conceptual approach to discovering the varieties of theism complements and gives systematic structure to his study of the history of ideas. From the late 1930s until the publication of *The Zero Fallacy* in 1997, Hartshorne is continually refining the ways in which he thinks of the logically possible varieties of theism. In the early stages of his thinking on this issue Hartshorne focuses on the meanings of perfection. As his thought develops he explores the ways in which polar contrasts could apply to both God and the world.

The earliest example of the conceptual approach is the 1940 essay, "Three Ideas about God." The three ideas are: (1) God is in all respects perfect or complete; (2) God is perfect and complete in some respects, but not in all; and (3) God is in no respect entirely perfect. Hartshorne argues for the merits of the second idea and rejects the other two. What is important for our purposes, however, is that he expresses the second idea in two ways. In the first way he says that "a God *both* perfect and imperfect will be unchanging in the ways in which he is perfect, and changing in the ways in which he is not perfect" (*Reality,* 160). In the second way, Hartshorne clarifies that perfection has different meanings and that it may be incorrect to speak even of a changing God as *imperfect*. God may be, in some respects, unsurpassable by all others, but in other respects, surpassable, but only by the divine self.

The 1940 essay is the last time Hartshorne refers to the God in whom he believes as in any way imperfect.[8] Indeed, a year later, in *Man's Vision of God,* he is much clearer about the meanings of perfection and about "The Formally Possible Doctrines" of God. He says that a God who is unsurpassable by any being, including the divine self, possesses *A-perfection*, or absolute perfection. A God who is unsurpassable by any being excluding the divine self is said to possess *R-perfection*, or relative perfection. Hartshorne

8. Curiously, Hartshorne reprinted this essay in *Reality as Social Process* (1953) without revising its potentially misleading use of the word "imperfect" to describe God.

notes that a single being may possess both kinds of perfection, provided that it does not have them in the same respects. Thus, rather than saying, as he had a year earlier, that God is perfect in some respects and imperfect in others, he says that God is both *A-perfect* and *R-perfect* in different respects.

If one adds the possibility of denying either *A-perfection* or *R-perfection* and if one assumes that all aspects of a being must be taken into account, then one has an exhaustive classification (table 1, modified from Hartshorne, *Man's Vision*, 9). If God is in no respect imperfect, then descriptions 1, 2, and 5 are the theistic options. Ideas of a deity or deities that are finite, limited, or even wicked are covered by the other options. Description 7 may also be considered the atheistic alternative.

Table 1

1. A	Absolute perfection in *all* respects.
2. AR	Absolute perfection in *some* respects, relative perfection in all others.
3. ARI	Absolute perfection, relative perfection, and imperfection, each in *some* respects.
4. AI	Absolute perfection in *some* respects, imperfection in all others.
5. R	Relative perfection in *all* respects.
6. RI	Relative perfection in some respects, imperfection in all others.
7. I	Imperfection in *all* respects.

Hartshorne's classification is an improvement upon most treatments of the theistic question before his time. By introducing the concept of *R-perfection* he demonstrates that most philosophers and theologians, including

those who assume that God can in no way be imperfect, have not considered an important alternative, namely that there could be a perfect form of change in the divine being. Thus, to do justice to the theistic question—including the question whether God exists—one must place an open view of God (description 2) alongside classical theism (description 1) as a possible way to conceive of the divine reality. Hartshorne himself makes a clean break with classical theism when he refers to God as "the self-surpassing surpasser of all" (*Divine Relativity*, 20).

Although Hartshorne's early classification is useful, it is not fine-grained enough to tease out any differences between free-will theism and process theism. For this, we must turn to Hartshorne's later attempts at classification. His next attempt at categorizing theistic doctrines is in "A Mathematical Analysis of Theism" (1943), reprinted a decade later as the epilogue of *Philosophers Speak of God*. In this article Hartshorne again uses the distinction between *A-perfection* and *R-perfection*. But now he adds the distinction between God as in some sense independent and creative of the universe and God as inclusive of, and possibly identical to, the universe. This yields a ninefold classification, excluding the possibilities where either God or the universe does not exist ("Mathematical," 34; *Philosophers Speak of God*, 512) (table 2).

Table 2

(1) A-C	(4) A-CW	(7) A-W
(2) AR-C	(5) AR-CW	(8) AR-W
(3) R-C	(6) R-CW	(9) R-W

A = *A-perfection*; R = *R-perfection*; C = God as in some sense independent and creative of the universe; W = God as inclusive of, and possibly identical to, the universe. When the contrasts appear side by side (e.g. AR or CW) it is understood that God exhibits the qualities in different respects; a letter standing alone (e.g. A, R, C, or W) indicates that God exhibits the quality in all respects.

This classification preserves the contrast between classical theism (description 1) and the open view of God. However, the open view of God branches

into three possibilities, 2, 5, and 8. Description 2 is closest to the free-will theism, and 5 is Hartshorne's position.

Hartshorne's next classification system is in *Philosophers Speak of God* (1953). However, in this work—excluding the epilogue which we have just discussed—he seems less interested in providing an exhaustive array of options than in designating historically significant versions of theism as they contrast with process theism (although see Hartshorne's comment in "God," 297). Hartshorne and Reese categorize theistic doctrines in terms of five questions: Is God eternal (E)? Is God temporal (T)? Is God conscious (C)? Does God know the world (K)? and Does God include the world (W)? Answering all these questions in the affirmative yields Hartshorne's theism, symbolized ETCKW. Other forms of theism are construed as partial denials of ETCKW. For example, Aristotle's theism is EC, classical theism is ECK, and classical pantheism is ECKW. Free-will theism is best represented as ETCK. The philosophers who Hartshorne and Reese list as adherents of ETCK are Fausto Socinus and Jules Lequyer.[9] As in the 1943 classification, it is the issue of whether God includes the world that sets process theism apart from free-will theism.

Hartshorne's attempt to think clearly about the logically possible forms of theism began to take its most perspicuous form with the publication of *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (1970). He takes his clue from the different ways that classical theism and process theism apply metaphysical contrasts to God and the world. For example, consider the seven contrasts suggested in our analysis of classical theism above and shown in table 3. According to Hartshorne, classical theism is monopolar in the sense that it associates God with only one pole of the pairs of contrasts; likewise, the world is characterized by only one side of the list of contrasts. Hartshorne attributes each pair of contrasts, in different senses, to both God and the world—hence, *dipolar theism*, one of the names for Hartshorne's view.

9. Socinus is not as close to free-will theism as Lequyer due to his unorthodox views on the trinity. Lequyer was a devout Catholic whose views on most doctrinal matters match free-will theism. For more on Lequyer see Viney, "Jules Lequyer"; Viney "William James on Free Will: The French Connection"; Lequyer, *Translation*; and Lequyer, *Jules Lequyer.*

Table 3

	God	*World*
Ultimate contrasts as applied to God and the world according to classical theism	immutable	mutable
	necessary	contingent
	eternal	temporal
	simple	complex
	immaterial	material
	impassible	passible
	creator	creature

The seven contrasts listed in table 3 are not the only ones Hartshorne discusses. There are also the contrasts absolute/relative, independent/dependent, infinite/finite, cause/effect, object/subject, actual/potential, being/becoming, psychical/physical, and others (*Creative Synthesis,* 100–101). Formally speaking, each member of a pair is such that it applies to God or it does not. Thus, for each pair there are four possibilities. For example, in the case of the necessity/contingency contrast, either (1) God is wholly necessary, (2) God is wholly contingent, (3) God is necessary and contingent in different respects, or (4) God is neither necessary nor contingent (which can be considered the atheistic option). A similar fourfold analysis applies to the world. The combined possibilities for any pair of contrasts as applied to both God and the world are exactly sixteen (table 4). Each of these sixteen possibilities is listed in *Creative Synthesis* (266, 271). However, Hartshorne says that he did not discover the four-row, four-column arrangement until his ninetieth birthday, with the help of Joseph Pickle at Colorado College (personal correspondence, April 1992).[10]

10. The 4 X 4 matrix appears in four of Hartshorne's recent publications ("Aesthetic," 17; "Can Philosophers Cooperate?", 17; "God," 296; *Zero Fallacy,* 83). Prior to these writings, Hartshorne's customary practice (excepting *Creative Synthesis* and

The sixteenfold matrix is a substantial advance on Hartshorne's early attempts at listing the logically possible doctrines of God. First, the sixteenfold table explicitly includes both God and the world whereas his earlier views included the world only implicitly. Second, the sixteen positions are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. In other words, one of the alternatives is true and fifteen are false. Third, Hartshorne constructs similar sixteenfold tables for other polar contrasts, providing even more detailed distinctions among theistic and atheistic doctrines ("Process Theology," 229, 231; "Metaphysics," 70; "Can Philosophers Cooperate?", 17; cf. Viney, "Review of *The Zero Fallacy,*" 118). Finally, Hartshorne's matrices provide an exact method for making distinctions among various types of historically significant worldviews: Parmenidean monism or classic Advaita Vedanta can be summarized by N.o; early Buddhist thought by O.cn; Aristotle's theism is N.cn; Aquinas's theism is N.c; Stoic or Spinozistic pantheism is N.n; LaPlacean atheism is O.n; John Stuart Mill's theism is C.n; William James's theism is C.c; Lequyer's theism is NC.c; Russell's atheism is O.c; Hartshorne's theism is NC.cn.

"Metaphysics," 67) was to omit the atheistic options (column IV) and the acosmic options (row 4) (cf. *Aquinas to Whitehead,* 18; "Process Theology," 299, 231).

A significant difference between Hartshorne's earlier presentation of the matrix for necessity and contingency and his later presentations concerns the interpretation of the zeros. In *Creative Synthesis* (1970), the zeros are the atheistic and acosmic positions (271–72). In the later discussions, however, he interprets the zeros more broadly as "God is impossible (or has no modal status)" and the "World is impossible (or has no modal status)" ("Aesthetic," 18; "Can Philosophers Cooperate?", 17; "God," 296; *Zero Fallacy,* 83).

One may prefer the earlier interpretation on the grounds that the question of *de re* modalities should be treated separately. In other words, *the table for necessity and contingency should be constructed on the assumption that God or the world have modal status or they (one or the other) do not exist.* To illustrate, a Quinean atheist would say that God does not exist, the world *does* exist, but the world has no modal status. This option cannot be represented as O.n, O.c, or O.cn since each presupposes modal status for the world. Nor can it be represented as O.o without serious distortion, since the Quinean does not deny that the world exists.

Table 4

	I. God wholly necessary	II. God wholly contingent	III. God necessary & contingent	IV. God nonexistent
1. World wholly necessary	N.n	C.n	NC.n	O.n
2. World wholly contingent	N.c	C.c	NC.c	O.c
3. World necessary & contingent	N.cn	C.cn	NC.cn	O.cn
4. World nonexistent	N.o	C.o	NC.o	O.o

N/C represent necessity and contingency as applied to God; c/n represent necessity and contingency as applied to the world; O/o represent the atheistic and acosmic (no world) options respectively (following Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis,* 271–72).

Hartshorne's matrix demonstrates that he is not guilty of arguing from false alternatives as some free-will theists claim. On the contrary, he envisions more alternatives than the free-will theists—or anyone else, for that matter—consider in arguing for their position. Does Hartshorne include the option of free-will theism? We have already seen that two of his early attempts at categorizing theistic doctrines include free-will theism (i.e. AR-C and ETCK). The sixteenfold table also includes free-will theism (i.e. NC.c). We saw above that Hartshorne classifies Socinus and Lequyer as adherents

of ETCK; he also places them in the NC.c category (*Aquinas to Whitehead,* 18).[11]

Hartshorne's matrices also provide an exact method for making distinctions among various types of free-will theism. Consider the questions, for example, whether God is eternal and/or temporal (E/T) and whether God is immutable and/or mutable (I/M). William Alston, who David Basinger says is probably a free-will theist (*Case,* 140), argues that one may admit contingency in God but adhere to the divine immutability and nontemporality (Alston). Expanding on Hartshorne's notation, we have NC/E/I.c/t/m; that is, God is necessary and contingent in different respects, wholly eternal and immutable, but the world is wholly contingent, temporal, and mutable. Other free-will theists, however, accept contingency, change, and time as part of the divine life—symbolically, NC/ET/IM.c/t/m.

Finally, it should be noted that, since any pair of contrasts is subject to the same formal analysis in terms of a 4 X 4 matrix, the number of formally possible concepts of God and the world is far greater than perhaps even Hartshorne has realized. Hartshorne says that "the sixteen options become thirty-two if each is subdivided into those accepting and those not accepting Plato's mind-body analogy" (*Zero Fallacy,* 83). While this is correct, the number of formal alternatives leaps to 256 (16 X 16) if one combines any two pairs of contrasts. More generally, if *m* equals the number of contrasts one wishes to include in talking about God and the world, then 16^m is the number of formal alternatives available.

Hartshorne's Case Against Free-will Theism

Although Hartshorne is clearly aware of the free-will theist's position and knows of philosophers in the past who defended it, he never argues against it directly. Indeed, he views free-will theists of the past more as allies than foes in the contest with classical theism. For example, Lequyer broke with the fundamental tenet of classical theism, and it is this fact, more than the doctrines that he shares with classical theism, that Hartshorne finds

11. On one occasion, Hartshorne mistakenly puts Lequyer in the camp of those who attribute creativity to every creature ("God," 305). Lequyer clearly rejects this idea (Viney, "Jules Lequyer," 233 n 10).

impressive. This is in keeping with Lequyer's own self-understanding. Lequyer knew full well that he was attacking the heart of classical theism. He did not expend energy detailing his agreements with Aquinas. Nevertheless, Hartshorne is not at a loss for arguments against the aspects of free-will theism that diverge from process theism. We shall examine Hartshorne's arguments concerning three topics: creation and freedom, the value of creation for God, and the concept of omnipotence as it relates to theodicy.

Before proceeding, it will be useful to introduce two points of clarification especially relevant to the first two topics. First, the question whether God creates *ex nihilo* is distinct from the question whether the universe had a beginning. Aquinas is very clear on this. In *Summa Theologica* I, he argues that to create is to bring something from nothing, and this is what God does in creating (q. 45, arts. 1 and 2). Only then does he address the question whether the world had a beginning. This, he claims, cannot be demonstrated but is a matter of faith (q. 46, art. 2). He follows the same procedure in *Summa Contra Gentiles,* II (chs. 16, 31–38). According to Aquinas, God's "power and goodness are made manifest above all by the fact that things other than Himself were not always in existence" (*Truth* bk. 2, 114, SCG II 38, 15). Nevertheless, Aquinas allows that God could have created an eternal universe *ex nihilo.*

In *Man's Vision of God,* Hartshorne does not pay attention to these distinctions. He argues against creation *ex nihilo* by arguing against an absolute beginning to the universe (*Man's Vision,* 231f). William Lane Craig, in countering Hartshorne's arguments, likewise ignores Aquinas's distinctions. It might be supposed that if God created the universe with an absolute beginning, it must have been created *ex nihilo.* But that is false. Some doctrines of God are such that God creates the universe *ex deo,* from the divine being. It should also be noted that creation *ex nihilo,* in the proper sense, is a doctrine of God conserving the universe in existence. A God who merely causes the universe's first moment is the God of deism. Hartshorne has some reason to ignore the distinction between creation *ex nihilo* and the doctrine that the universe had a beginning insofar as he accepts the Aristotelean identification of eternity and necessity (Hartshorne, *Insights,* 43). On the other hand, Hartshorne offers other arguments against creation *ex nihilo* wherein he does not make this assumption and which may, for that reason, be considered stronger.

A second point of clarification is that Hartshorne does not and need not accept the assumption that, all else being equal, a God with the power to

create *ex nihilo* is greater than one who lacks this power. The way in which the assumption is usually put is that a God without the power of creating *ex nihilo* is dependent upon something external to the divine being in order to exercise its creative power. In Hartshorne's theism, however, there is no external "matter" or group of beings upon which God is dependent (*Man's Vision,* 231). It is true that God's creativity is always exercised in response to actual entities already in existence. However, it would be incorrect to say that God's creativity depends upon the actual entities to which it in fact responds, for God's creativity would be exercised on whatever actual entities happened to exist. Nor is the world to which God responds external to the divine being. The all-inclusive divine reality of panentheism is met by no being that it did not first have a hand in making. The cosmos, considered as a single entity stretching out over time, is nothing more than the divine body and therefore not external to God.

Creation and Freedom. We noted above that free-will theists agree with classical theists in the belief that the existence or nonexistence of the world is a divine prerogative. God could have chosen not to create the universe, but instead chose to create it.[12] For Hartshorne and other process theists, the nonexistence of the universe is an impossibility. Process theists do not claim that the actual universe is necessary, but they do say that some universe or other must exist. God could not choose not to have a universe.

Hartshorne wonders whether creation *ex nihilo* can have any other connection to ordinary meanings of "creation" or "making" than the fanciful power of the magician who produces a genie out of a bottle (*Omnipotence,* 58). Hartshorne provides an illustration:

> I am a creature created by God: am I created out of nothing? If so, then I was not created by using my parents; for they were by no means nothing. Either my parents were genuinely causative of me, or they were not. If they were, then God plus nothing was not the cause; if my parents were *not* part-causes of me, then, by the same reasoning, the creatures are never causes of anything. But in that case, how do we know what we mean by *cause*? (*Wisdom,* 88–89; cf. *Omnipotence,* 74)

12. Classical theists and free-will theists agree that God's creative acts as related in the Bible are best understood as *ex nihilo* creation. This idea can be traced at least as far back as Tatian in the late second century C.E. (Hatch, 196). As for the interpretation of Genesis, authorities can be cited on both sides. Gerhard von Rad claims that Genesis 1:1–2 indicates the notion of creation *ex nihilo* (47). John Marks, writing for *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (3), W. Gunther Plaut, writing a Jewish commentary on the Torah (1981, 18), and Terence E. Fretheim, writing for *The New Interpreter's Bible* (342, 356), do not agree.

Of course, Aquinas accepted precisely the implication that Hartshorne finds absurd, namely, that the creatures never create anything. For Aquinas, one's parents are merely the vehicles whereby matter is rearranged so as to form (not create) a new human being. Strictly speaking, according to Aquinas, what God creates is your-parents-having-you. Your parents had no part in your creation.

It is a fair question what philosophical problem is answered by this way of speaking that compensates for the problems it raises (Hartshorne, *Insights,* 76). Consider the complication for human freedom. On Aquinas's view, God creates your-parents-having-you. Part of this whole is the decisions your parents made in having you. Did God, in creating this whole, also create the decisions your parents made in having you? If not, then there is something of the whole, your-parents-having-you, that God did not create. If so, then it is God's decision, not theirs, that leads to your birth. In other words, either God does not create this whole *ex nihilo* or human decisions included in this whole are not free.

For Aquinas, this problem is solved by saying that a person's *free* decisions can be wholly attributed to God. According to Aquinas, the will is free only if it can produce either of two (or more) contrary effects; that is to say, it "has the ability to produce this effect or that; for which reason it is contingent in regard to either one or the other" (*Truth* bk. 3, 245; SCG III, 73, 2). Aquinas ascribes this sort of freedom to human beings. On the other hand, he insists that an agent's *free* decision is both wholly attributable to the agent and wholly attributable to God (*Truth* bk. 3, 237, SCG III, 70, 8). Aquinas insists that God's will is efficacious in producing our free acts without, for that reason, imparting necessity to those acts.

> Since the divine will is perfectly efficacious, it follows not only that things are done, which God wills to be done, but also that they are done in the way He wills. Now God wills some things to be done necessarily, some contingently, so that there be a right order in things for the perfection of the universe. (*Basic Writings,* 208; ST I, Q 19, art. 8)

If it makes sense to say that God "wills something to come to pass contingently" (Aquinas, *Truth* bk. 1, 267; SCG I, 85, 4), then it makes sense to say that God creates our free decisions.

Aquinas's solution is not open to free-will theists, who, like Hartshorne, opt for an incompatibilist or libertarian account of freedom (Basinger, *Case,* 32; cf. Hartshorne, *Omnipotence,* 20). Hartshorne maintains that it is contradictory "to fully determine the *free* act of another" ("Clarke's Thomistic Critique," 269). Indeed, it is difficult to understand how Aquinas escapes contradiction on this point unless by a play on words. For example, suppose you play a game of roulette, whose outcome is a matter of chance and therefore contingent. How could God guarantee that you win unless God removed the element of contingency from the game? An analogous argument applies to freedom. How could God guarantee what one freely decides to do without removing from the decision a necessary condition of its being free, namely, its contingency?[13]

Aquinas also maintains that a creature's decision could be otherwise insofar as God could will it to be otherwise. This is correct, but it is not enough to insure that the decision is free in the libertarian sense. Robert Kane argues that the central elements in a libertarian account of freedom are the interrelated concepts of "ultimate responsibility" and "alternate possibilities" (33, 35, 59). In the libertarian view, persons are free only if (a) they are personally responsible for the sufficient explanation of their acts of will and (b) they have the ability, at least in some cases, to have willed otherwise although all relevant antecedent conditions remained the same. When these conditions are satisfied, it is impossible for the activity of God (or any other being) to be the sufficient explanation for an individual's free decision. On the libertarian account, the creature must be able to decide, at least in some cases, in either of two (or more) contrary ways, *regardless of what God wills the decision to be.* Therefore, the Thomistic solution to the problem of

13. William James and many other libertarians emphasize that contingency is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of libertarian freedom (Viney, "William James on Free Will and Determinism"; Viney and Crosby). Another important condition is consciousness. Hence there are significant disanalogies between the roulette-wheel example and the free-will example. Nevertheless, their common element is contingency.

reconciling creation *ex nihilo* and the freedom of the creatures is not open to free-will theists.[14]

Analogies drawn from human experience invariably put *ex nihilo* creation in tension with libertarian freedom. For example, James Ross argues that the freedom of the characters in Shakespeare's plays is in no way negated by the fact that they are Shakespeare's creation (Ross, 250–72).[15] This is true provided one concedes the controversial claim that the characters in Shakespeare's plays are genuine individuals (cf. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis,* 242). Even granting this assumption, the only freedom the characters have is compatibilist freedom—a point that Ross seems to concede (xxx, xxxvii).

Craig proposes another possibility. Perhaps the world's dependence on God is similar to a dream's dependence on the mind dreaming (Craig, 154). Again, the same objections apply. Dream people are not genuine individuals and even if they were they could not be said to have libertarian freedom. If we are God's thinking or dreaming, we possess at best a compatibilist form of freedom.

Craig is at pains to stress that the dreaming analogy does not imply that the world is God's thinking. According to Craig, "God's creating and sustaining a world in being is *like* my creating and sustaining a world in thought—but this does not imply the world is God's thinking" (154). This is correct, for there are always disanalogies in any comparison between God and the creatures to be considered. But this does not address Hartshorne's criticism. According to Hartshorne, the *likeness* between God's creating and sustaining a world in being and my creating and sustaining a world in thought compromises human freedom. Alternately, if the creatures make decisions not wholly determined by God, then the relation of those decisions to God's activity is *unlike* the relation between one's mind and one's dreams.

14. The best critiques from a process perspective of the Thomistic account of human free will and divine providence are given by David Ray Griffin (*God,* 77–84; *Evil,* 72–77).

15. Ross denies that he is arguing by analogy in using the example of Shakespeare and his creation (268). Nevertheless, he clearly believes that beings whose every attribute depends upon the actions of a creator may nonetheless be free. This is a claim that neither free-will theism nor process theism accepts.

Craig's response is that analogies for creation *ex nihilo* serve only an illustrative purpose. He continues, "the philosophical concept of *creatio ex nihilo* is clear and well-understood and demonstrations of its truth or falsity may be discussed wholly without reference to human analogies" (154–55). My suspicion is that Craig believes that human analogies are unnecessary because he thinks that there are strictly philosophical and scientific grounds for claiming that the universe had a beginning and because he makes no distinction between this doctrine and the doctrine that the universe came into being *ex nihilo*. He does not deal directly with the question whether creation *ex nihilo*, in the proper sense, is compatible with human freedom. Thus, Craig's observation in no way answers Hartshorne's dilemma that creation *ex nihilo* is either inconsistent with libertarian freedom or we do not understand the ordinary meanings of "create" and "make."

It is open to the free-will theist to modify the standard account of creation *ex nihilo* to meet Hartshorne's dilemma. Perhaps the world is like Swiss cheese, with the holes representing the spheres of creaturely decisions.[16] On this model, God creates the world *ex nihilo*, but leaves room for the free will of its inhabitants. It is a fair question, however, whether this view is best described as a modification of creation *ex nihilo* or a departure from it. This view attributes creative power to some of the creatures (contra Aquinas) and thereby denies that every aspect of the world is created by God (again, contra Aquinas).

In effect, the Swiss cheese view is one form of the doctrine that God and (at least some of) the creatures are co-creators, a view that approximates Hartshorne's metaphysics. The only difference is that Hartshorne attributes creativity to every genuine individual. The obvious question, from Hartshorne's perspective, is why, if one is willing to attribute creative power to human creatures, one denies it of other creatures? Interestingly, Basinger seems to move in this direction when he speaks of his cat "acting in a partially self-determining fashion" ("Process Theism," 218). On the other hand, Basinger suggests that the absence of a central nervous system is a criterion for the complete absence of self-determining power (ibid.). Of course, this would mean that God cannot be self-determining, a conclusion Basinger surely wants to avoid. Moreover, Hartshorne argues that having a brain may be no more necessary to having mind-like qualities than having lungs and a

16. I owe this idea and this analogy to Robert Kane.

stomach are to oxygenating and digesting, as in one-celled organisms ("Mind," 81).

A complete defense of Hartshorne's position would require an examination of his case for psychicalism, the view that feeling is pervasive in nature. This strikes some as "fantastic" (Craig, 149), but Hartshorne is convinced that the prejudice against psychicalism is "as strong as it is little reasoned" (*Zero Fallacy,* 147).[17] Be that as it may, it remains true that the more beings to which free-will theists attribute creative power beyond the human arena, the less their idea of divine creation resembles the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and the more it resembles Hartshorne's view. Hartshorne posits creativity in every concrete particular. This does not mean that every actual entity possesses human freedom. On the other hand, it does mean that *the being of every actual entity is its becoming*; and the becoming of an actual entity is precisely its little act of creation. If God were to create an actual entity *ex nihilo* God would have to create its coming to be, its becoming, and in so doing, coopt its creative act.

The Value of Creation. Free-will theism and process theism agree in rejecting classical theism's God of pure act, devoid of potency. Classical theism was troubled by the conundrum of how a God of unconditional love could be unaffected by the joys and sorrows of the creatures. Anselm stated the problem most eloquently: "But how art thou compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if thou art passionless, thou doest not feel sympathy; and if thou doest not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate" (Anselm, 13; *Proslogium,* ch. 8). Anselm's answer to this puzzle, which was standard for classical theism, is that God is compassionate, and we feel the effects of that compassion, but God feels nothing. The answer of free-will theists and

17. Four more points should be made by way of clarification and defense of Hartshorne's psychicalism. (1) Qualities of mind, freedom, and creativity are found elsewhere in nature besides in human beings. (2) These qualities admit of degrees. (3) Hartshorne does not say that everything has a mind. The sentient-insentient distinction is not a qualitative contrast but a difference of *logical type* corresponding to the difference between the singular and the aggregate (*Aquinas to Whitehead,* 38). (4) Hartshorne says that the only way the simplest entities could show themselves to have primitive feelings is by responding to stimuli. Thus, "any evidence there logically could be for very low-level sentience there actually seems to be" (*Creative Synthesis,* 36).

process theists is simpler and more straightforward. God is ideally open to creaturely influence, and this is what is meant by God's compassion. Hartshorne is fond of quoting Whitehead's description of God as "the fellow-sufferer who understands" (Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 351).

Another way of making the point is to say that God is both the supreme contributing cause to all that is *and* the supreme effect of all that is. Hartshorne argues that, while the creatures cannot be creators of God's existence, they are "part-creators" of the divine actuality (i.e., experiences).

> When Beethoven, by his devotion and partly free action, made new forms of beauty not hitherto contained in all of creation, he created a new detail of value in the experience of God, he contributed to the divine reality, without thereby in the least deciding that there should be this divine reality to which contribution could be made. (*Man's Vision,* 109)

The idea that God is both supreme cause and supreme effect is one dimension of what Hartshorne calls *dual transcendence*. Moreover, these two sides of God's transcendence are not unrelated. According to Hartshorne, God "influences us supremely because he is supremely open to our influence" (*Creative Synthesis,* 12).

Hartshorne is generally more clear than free-will theists about this aspect of the openness of God. The reason for this is that he understands God's knowledge primarily as a feeling of the feelings of the creatures. Free-will theists tend to think of God's knowledge only as a knowledge of the truth value of propositions. In this, they again share something important with classical theism. According to Hartshorne,

> Traditional treatments of omniscience (as "impassive," wholly independent, etc.), seem to imply that God's knowing is akin to our most abstract and indirect awareness of things, a "knowledge about" not a "knowledge by acquaintance," remote not intimate, and by implication fallible and inadequate in the highest degree. ("Omniscience," 547; cf. *Man's Vision,* 241–42)

It is often noted that this distinction is marked in other languages by different words for the verb "to know." For instance, in French *connaître* means to know by being in relation to or to be familiar with, whereas *savoir* means to know that something is the case, to possess an ability, or to retain in memory. An illustration may make the point more clearly. If a bird suffers, then God knows that the proposition "the bird suffers" is true. This, however, is a relatively abstract form of knowing. In Hartshorne's view, God's knowledge of the truth of the proposition is merely the abstract aspect of God's direct awareness of or openness to the bird's suffering. In French one could say, "Dieu *sait* que le oiseau souffre parce que Dieu *connaît* la souffrance du oiseau" (God knows that the bird suffers because God is acquainted with the bird's suffering).

Two interrelated consequences of the doctrine of the openness of God are (1) God has experiences that could not exist without the existence of the world, and (2) God continually has novel opportunities to exercise the divine love that would not be available without the world. Each of these consequences represents values that could not accrue to God without the existence of the world. It is on this basis that Hartshorne claims that "the perfect-*and*-the-imperfect is something superior to the perfect 'alone'—or as independent of the imperfect" (*Divine Relativity,* 19; cf. *Man's Vision,* 238–39). The alternative is that God's relations to the creatures add no value to the Godhead that would not exist without them. Free-will theists seem to deny this and accept Hartshorne's reasoning; we have seen that they speak of God's desire to have "dynamic give-and-take" relationships with the creatures. These kinds of relationships and the specific values associated with them would not exist had God chosen not to create this universe or another like it having similarly free creatures.

W. Norris Clarke notes that medieval philosophers anticipated Hartshorne's objection and answered it.

> As the medievals put it, God + creatures = *plura entia, sed non plus entis*. That is to say, there are more beings, more *sharers* in being, but not more *qualitative intensity* of perfection of being itself; or, if you wish, there are *more sharers in* perfection but *no higher level* of perfection. (Clarke, 108)

Clarke argues by way of an analogy. When a mathematics teacher shares his or her knowledge with a group of pupils, there are more people with mathematical wisdom, but there is no more mathematical wisdom. Clarke complains that Hartshorne's argument betrays a crude understanding of the divine infinity, as though it were a spatial quantity, additions to which would

make it better. On the Thomistic view, however, God's creating the world and all its creatures does not bring new values into being, it only adds to the number of beings who participate in the infinite source of all value.

From Hartshorne's point of view, Clarke's or Aquinas's doctrine of the infinite value of God excludes precisely those values that could not possibly exist apart from the existence of the creatures. To be sure, Clarke is correct that the mathematician's knowledge exists whether or not it is imparted to the students. On the other hand, whatever value comes from interacting with a particular student cannot exist unless there is that student with whom to interact. The value of the creatures to God, which is at least in part the value of God's *interaction* with the creatures, cannot possibly be construed as borrowing its value by participation in something else. No matter how one wishes to construe the divine infinity—and Hartshorne has a great deal to say about this—God cannot possess the value of a loving relation to the creatures unless the creatures actually exist.[18]

Some free-will theists might resist this conclusion on the grounds that God, according to their belief, is a trinity and that this doctrine implies an irreducible sociality in the divine being (Morris, 296). In that case God has the value of loving relationships among the three persons of the Godhead *whether or not God chooses to create a world.* This reply, however, misses the point. Hartshorne can allow, for the sake of argument, that God is a trinity. The question remains: Are there positive values in God's relations to the world that are not already contained in the loving relations of the trinity? If so, then trinity-*and*-the-world is something superior to the trinity alone.

The God of free-will theism, in having the power to create the world *ex nihilo*, also has the power not to have the values that come with loving the world and being affected by it. For such a God, the choice between having a world and not having a world is tantamount to the choice between having the values associated with having a world and not having those values. We have seen, however, that God-*and*-the-world is superior to God alone. It follows that the God of free-will theism has the power to be a reality that is inferior to the God of process theism. By choosing to create a world, the God

18. Hartshorne would add two other criticisms. (1) Clarke's views uncritically accept that "greatest possible value" makes sense; but this may be no more meaningful than the idea of a greatest positive integer. (2) Values with which we are most familiar are often incompossible. For instance, if I wish to enjoy the specific values of a celibate life I cannot also enjoy the specific values of married life.

of free-will theism chooses to have all of the values already had by the God of process theism. Contrary to what one might have supposed, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* adds nothing to the perfection of God that cannot be had without it. As Hartshorne says, "To impute to God the 'ability' to do nothing seems to me no praise of deity" ("Clarke's Thomistic Critique," 270).

Omnipotence and Theodicy. Whitehead commented on the unfortunate habit among some medieval philosophers of paying God "metaphysical compliments" (*Science,* 258). This is nowhere more evident than in the concept of omnipotence, although the modern philosophers were as guilty as the medievals. Descartes, notoriously, held that God could have created circles in such a way that their radii were unequal (Kenny, 16–19). Hartshorne insists that we attribute to God the highest form of power in the greatest degree. He maintains, however, that classical theists attributed too much of the wrong kind of power to God; they misconstrued the nature of divine power and the nature of the world upon which it is exerted. He refers to the traditional concept of omnipotence as one of a number of theological mistakes (*Omnipotence*). He even says that the traditional concept of omnipotence was not coherent enough to be false ("Philosophy of Death," 86). In Hartshorne's philosophy, the primary meaning of power is power over others that retain some power of their own. Divine power is the supreme instance of this kind of power.

Free-will theists agree with Hartshorne's rejection of compatibilism and thus they follow him in denying that God could bring about the free decisions of the creatures. Their most persistent complaint, however, is that Hartshorne's God is not powerful enough. David Basinger leads the way in his critique of this aspect of process theism (*Divine Power* and "Process Theism"). However, William Hasker provides the most forceful statement of the objection:

> God so conceived cannot create the heavens and the earth out of nothing, nor can he part the Red Sea for the people of Israel, nor can he raise Jesus from the dead as a pledge of victory over sin and eternal life. Nor, it seems, is God in a position to guarantee the eventual triumph of righteousness and the coming of his kingdom. (140)

Creation *ex nihilo* is at the top of Hasker's list. We have seen that this is a dubious honor to bestow upon the divine. The other things Hasker mentions, however, involve a different kind of power—the power to intervene and alter

the natural course of events, and if necessary, to perform miracles. A God who can create *ex nihilo* could surely do these things. On the other hand, it is conceivable that a God could have the ability to perform miracles without being able to bring the universe into existence from nothing.

The free-will theist's criticism can be reformulated as a proposal about omnipotence: God should be able to do anything consistent with the divine nature that does not entail the denial of libertarian freedom.[19] This includes the ability to create unfree beings whose behavior and "decisions"—if one may speak of decisions in an unfree being—are divinely controlled. It also involves the ability to thwart human decisions by preventing them from being acted upon or by preventing their natural consequences from occurring. Finally, it includes the ability to perform miraculous acts like the ones recounted in the Bible.

Hartshorne's characterization of divine power is surprisingly close to the free-will theist's view. Hartshorne would say that God should be able to do anything consistent with the divine nature that does not entail the absence or the denial of creativity in the creatures. We have already noted that free-will theists tend to limit freedom to the human sphere. Hartshorne, following Whitehead, understands freedom—which in a generalized form is called creativity—as a transcendental, applicable to all concrete particulars. Any being over which God has influence must have some level of creativity. The internal logic of Hartshorne's position and that of free-will theism are no different—God cannot determine the free decisions of others. The difference between the two views is that Hartshorne, unlike free-will theists, believes that some degree of freedom is present in every actuality over which God could exert power.

The criticism that haunts free-will theism's proposal about omnipotence is not novel. It is a version of the problem of suffering. God has both the motive and the power to prevent gratuitous suffering. Yet gratuitous suffering apparently exists in abundant quantities, both at the human level and throughout the animal kingdom. Of course, it is *possible* that the God of free-will theism has sufficient reason to permit the enormous amount of apparently gratuitous suffering that occurs. Thus, a well-constructed

19. The qualification "consistent with the divine nature" is necessary if one accepts that the existence/essence of God is immutable, as both free-will theists and process theists agree it is.

theodicy can deflect the criticism that the existence of such suffering is incompatible with the existence of a good and all-powerful God. The nagging question, however, remains: Why doesn't God do more? This problem is the source of a great irony in the debate between process theism and free-will theism. Process theists are faulted, in effect, for not attributing power to God sufficient to prevent gratuitous suffering. Free-will theists attribute power to God sufficient to prevent gratuitous suffering but are obliged to argue that God is not at fault for not using it or for using it in ways that we find utterly baffling.

Basinger agrees that this is "the strongest challenge" to a free-will theist's theodicy. He suggests three lines of defense. First, we do not know that God is not already intervening in a maximally optimal way. Second, in order to make a strong case that God should do more, one must be able to show in any particular case that a significant increase of good over evil *for the entire world system* would result in God doing things differently. Third, God may not be a utilitarian. God may respect the "humanity" of even the worst offender even if it means that many others will suffer (Basinger, "Process Theism," 212).

Each of these arguments has serious defects. The first point cannot be used as an element in a defense since a necessary ingredient of a properly formulated theism is that God is acting in the maximally optimal way. If God is perfect, then God must act and (if this includes the ability to intervene) intervene in the best way possible. The question "Why doesn't God do more?" is precisely a challenge to the claim that God is acting in the best way possible. To reply that we do not know that God is not already acting in the best possible way is a *non sequitur*. Perhaps we do not know this. However, it is definitely counterintuitive to claim that God is acting in the best way possible when it seems possible to imagine ways in which the world would be a better place if God were to act differently. Either God is *not* acting in the best way possible, or we do not really understand what it means to imagine a better world. The burden of proof rests with the free-will theist, not with the critic.

Basinger's second argument suggests a radical skepticism concerning our ability to know whether God could act differently and still maintain the maximal balance of good over evil in the world. Of course, if one accepts such skepticism, then it must affect the free-will theist's position as well. The free-will theist is not in a position to judge that God could *not* do more. But is radical skepticism even consistent with the metaphysics of free-will

theism? Radical skepticism about our ability to judge whether God could override human freedom in any particular case without upending the cosmic scales of justice implies that the moral universe is in such a delicate balance that a change here or there would have far-reaching effects. While this is true of imagined changes in fundamental constants in physics, it is difficult to see why it would be true of human decisions. The consequences of God intervening in any particular case depend upon free decisions that we make. There is a flexibility in human responses that is unlike the machine-like inflexibility of laws of nature, where a change here or there *necessarily* leads to changes elsewhere. This necessity does not obtain between God's activity and *free* human responses to it. Hence, there need be no disastrous implications for the cosmic balance of good and evil were God to intervene more.

Basinger might respond that the burden of proof is on the critic to show that a significant increase in the cosmic balance of good over evil would result were God to intervene in a particular case. But what more significance does one require than that good be done? The suffering of the bird is certainly significant to the bird, and it must also be significant to an all-compassionate deity, even if that suffering has no other ramification for the universe than a mere numerical addition to the instances of suffering. Hence, the burden of proof that Basinger proposes does not seem very difficult to meet.

The question of whether God's acting differently would significantly alter the cosmic balance of good and evil can also be raised in Hartshorne's philosophy. Hartshorne claims that God is the cosmic ordering power who is responsible for the laws of nature. Furthermore, God "sets those limits outside which freedom would involve greater risks than opportunities" (*Logic,* 231). One may ask whether the opportunities for good justify the risks of evil. Hartshorne replies, "I have more faith in the reasons for belief in God than in our ability to estimate the relative values involved in the laws of nature, the planetary past, and the changes for the human future" (*Insights,* 336). In this passage, Hartshorne expresses a skepticism reminiscent of Basinger's. There is, however, a fundamental difference. For free-will theists, the question is whether God, *by intervening in particular cases*, would upset the cosmic balance of good and evil. For Hartshorne, the question is whether God, *by choosing different laws of nature*, could have further minimized the risk of evil and not diminished the opportunities for good. Basinger's skepticism is implausible both because alterations in human decisions need have no cosmic consequences and because a numerical addition to the good is the only cosmic consequence of any significance. Hartshorne's skepticism is justified to the extent that we know that alterations in laws of nature do have cosmic consequences.

Hartshorne permits himself a dose of recusancy about whether God could have chosen better laws of nature. He says, almost as an afterthought, "if I play at criticizing God, it is at this point" (*Omnipotence,* 126). He notes that our wholesale destruction of the environment, our penchant for driving other species to extinction, and our cruelty to each other on a mass scale make our species the "bullies of this planet" (*Zero Fallacy,* 222). Certainly, human wickedness is widespread and often systemic in earth's history. Yet it seems rash to judge the *cosmic* balance of good and evil upon the evidence of earth's example, especially given our relative isolation from other inhabitable worlds. Hartshorne wonders—half playfully, half seriously—whether "the billions of other solar systems [being] out of our reach" is a providential arrangement (*Zero Fallacy,* 214).

Basinger's third defense against the charge that God could do more is that God might not be a utilitarian. God may value the freedom of the creatures, including their freedom to harm one another, above the well-being that comes from not being harmed by the abuse of freedom. Ironically, if Basinger accepts this defense he cannot use the second argument. If God regards utilitarian considerations as irrelevant to governing the universe, then the *consequences* of our good or evil decisions are of less concern to God than our freedom to make decisions.

Be that as it may, this defense is unconvincing for three reasons. First, the God in whom free-will theists believe *does* at times value the well-being of victims over the freedom of others to do them harm. There are numerous examples in the Bible of God behaving in this fashion. Second, prayers to God to protect someone from being harmed by others would be unavailing if God values freedom above all. Third, Basinger's argument mistakenly assumes that if one is not a utilitarian one can never override the freedom of some people to promote the well-being of others. A utilitarian holds that the quantity of nonmoral good consequences defines the moral good—the greatest good for the greatest number *is* the moral good. One may deny utilitarianism in at least two ways. One could follow Kant and deny that nonmoral consequences are relevant to the moral good. On the other hand, one could simply deny that the moral good is solely defined in terms of nonmoral consequences. According to this more modest anti-utilitarian position, nonmoral consequences may be one factor but not the only factor

in assessing the moral good. If, as Basinger suggests, God is not a utilitarian, it does not follow that God considers consequences as irrelevant to the moral good. It may be that God, like us, ought to value the well-being of the would-be victim above the freedom of the would-be rapist. It may be that God, like us, ought to value the lives of six million Jews over the freedom of the Nazis (and others) to murder them. Even a nonutilitarian can be morally bound by good Samaritan laws.

Concluding Reflections: The Epistemological Chasm

Basinger might not agree with the criticisms we have given of his three arguments, but he acknowledges that his arguments on this issue have the quality of *ad hoc* hypotheses. He makes a remarkable concession to process theism.

> I am willing to grant that [my] explanations [of why God is justified in not doing more] are basically defensive while the explanation available to process theism. . . is not. That is, I am willing to grant that [free-will theists] cannot in this context offer explanations that flow obviously and naturally from their basic world-view while process theists can. ("Process Theism," 213)

In his book *The Case for Freewill Theism*, Basinger is equally candid in declaring a defensive posture. He believes that one is obliged to seriously consider reasons for different belief systems, but if one finds one's own views personally compelling, one is justified in merely "playing defense" (*Case,* 20).

Basinger speaks of "bunker theology," the idea that reason demands only that one defend one's views against external criticism. Clearly, Basinger and many other free-will theists do not accept bunker theology since they believe in the need for positive apologetics. On the other hand, there is a tendency on the part of free-will theists to adopt a "bunker mentality." On this model each side begins from its own fortress. The walls of the citadel are high and strong and have protected the people for many years. The inhabitants know that people in other cities see things differently but each side considers its ways as normative and the ways of others as deviant. They send out spies or, in friendlier times, emissaries, seeking information about other cities. They

return and report that the neighboring towns are no better fortified than their own; their counsel is to strengthen the castle walls, widen the moat, and stockpile provisions in case of a siege.

The sense of philosophical or theological inertia expressed in this parable is not altogether unfounded, although it would be unfair to say that debate is unavailing. For example, *Process Theology*, edited by Ronald Nash, is an often polemical and occasionally uncharitable attack from (with one exception) evangelical Christians against the heresies of process theism.[20] Nevertheless, Stephen Franklin, in his review of the volume, points out that process thinkers have at least elicited agreement from the contributors concerning the issues of God's real relations to the world, divine passibility, and divine temporality. Franklin calls this a "major shift in the evangelical interpretation of deity—a shift away from classical theism" (135; cf. Sanders, 94).

One finds equally promising flexibility on the part of process thinkers. The title of David Ray Griffin's second book on theodicy is indicative of this openness: *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations* (1991). The "reconsiderations" include explicitly acknowledging free-will theism as a partner in debate, taking the category of the demonic seriously, and affirming personal survival of death as an element of his theodicy. Even if some of us in the process camp cannot follow Griffin on all of these points (cf. Viney, "Review of *Evil Revisited*"), it must be admitted that he provides a fine example of the effectiveness of dialogue and honest reflection.

Optimism about the dialogue between free-will theists and process theists, and Hartshorne in particular, is tempered by the recognition of an epistemological chasm separating them. The ranks of free-will theists are filled mostly with evangelical Christians who give privileged status to the Bible. While they generally do not accept a fundamentalist doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, they definitely accept the Bible as authoritative (Bloesch, 37). Some may even believe that they are, in the words of Alvin Plantinga, "epistemically favored in some way," for example, by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit or by what John Calvin called the *sensus*

20. The exception is W. Norris Clarke, who is Catholic. Clarke is also exceptional in his understanding of process thought, especially in its Whiteheadian form, and in the creative ways in which he has attempted to incorporate the insights of process thought into his own Thomistic perspective. Clarke's example proves that Thomism is not the monolithic body of doctrine that some process thinkers may suppose.

divinitatis (296). Sophisticated free-will theists do not beg the question by using these beliefs as premises in arguments against process theism. Nevertheless, these beliefs function as nonnegotiable parameters of discussion.

Hartshorne brings an altogether different attitude to the questions of philosophical theology. To be sure, he was raised by Christian parents—his father and maternal grandfather were Episcopalian clergymen—however, he rejected orthodox Christianity as a young man. The only church he has financially supported is the Unitarian. For Hartshorne, the Christian Bible is a source of religious insight, but it is not the only source nor is it in any way protected from error. One could say, with a touch of irony, that he has a *catholic spirit* since he works at privileging no philosophical or religious perspective. Gautama, Jesus, and Plato, for example, are partners in the historical dialogue of which Hartshorne views himself as a participant. Although he has been accused from time to time of knowing too much about God, he claims no special access to truth and says that he actually claims to know *very little* about God; he claims to know only extreme abstractions about God (Viney, *Life and Thought,* 24; cf. Hartshorne, *Natural Theology,* 77).

If there is a potential for bias in Hartshorne's approach, it is in privileging the present over the past, or the later over the earlier. Peirce, for example, can learn from Aristotle, but Aristotle can learn nothing from Peirce. The same may occur in the life of an individual. The Hartshorne of 1987 took advantage of the work of the Hartshorne of 1941, but the reverse process is impossible. These advantages, however, come with important caveats. The intellectual fashions of the present can blind one to the genuine advances made by our ancestors. For example, Hartshorne argues that Plato's best insights have gone unappreciated by most historians of philosophy (*Insights,* 23–29; cf. Dombrowski, 35–38, 65–75, and 93–113). Furthermore, the concept of "taking advantage" presupposes that those in the past actually do have something to teach us. We can learn, in Hartshorne's words, not only from their *oversights* but also from their *insights*. Finally, each present becomes the past for some future present. Hence, as Whitehead warns, "the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly" (*Process and Reality,* xiv).

If the conversation between free-will theism and process theism is to continue, perhaps it should move in the direction of finding ways to bridge, or at least communicate across, the epistemological chasm. The issue of biblical authority may seem to stand in the way of genuine dialogue; on the other hand, loyalty to the Bible did not prevent evangelicals from joining process theism in departing from classical theism on the question of divine openness. Hartshorne's joint use of the history of philosophy and position matrices may also provide a relatively noncontroversial point of departure. The doctrine of the openness of God may itself provide inspiration by suggesting to free-will theists that openness to nontraditional, even heretical, perspectives can be an avenue to truth; and to process theists that there may be additional elements of traditional approaches worth accepting.

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Viney Discussion

Don Viney: Before we start the discussion, I just want to say that it has been a real pleasure to be here with all of you, and to listen to these great talks. I think this is a real honor to Professor Hartshorne to have everybody here. And I would really like to be there if you're right, Randy. We may indeed be there in 200 years.

Adam Blatner: Two things. One, a comment, you were talking about God and the sense of, as if it were, emotional interaction. I just wanted to mention a wonderful book by Nikos Kazantazakes, written maybe twenty-five or thirty years ago, called *The Saviors of God,* and the image of God found profoundly, almost viscerally involved in the destinies that our lives and our struggles toward evolution. And that that image can have a lot of power for people—the idea that God is trying to reach them. And in a way it makes a bridge to the problem of theodicy. . . . The other thing is, at some point, I would be happy to explore your dreams, because I bet you it's not crazy, and that your subconscious is trying to tell you something fascinating and informative. [laughter]

Viney: In fact, I made a very embarrassing slip. I don't know if you caught it—you probably did. At one point I looked down and I saw the word "Hartshorne" and I heard the word "God." [laughter]. He's been very significant to my life, no doubt about that.

Blatner: Dream work can sometimes tap into surprising intuitions that may be very facilitative with whatever you're working on right now.

Viney: What I need right now is a publisher for my *Conversations with God's Brother-in-Law.* That's what I really need. [laughter]

Auxier: Actually, since you bring that up, I should point out—it's in a footnote of my own paper—that my paper is based on somebody else's dream. One of my colleagues had a dream about Hartshorne talking with Aquinas and Kant and all of these folks after death. He came to me and said, "Randy, what does this mean?" and I wrote my paper.

Blatner: The Lord moves in mysterious ways!

Viney: I seriously doubt if Randy could write a paper about Hartshorne as chauffeur.

Marcus Clayton: He didn't drive a car because he thought it would be a mistake to drive a car as poorly as he rode a bicycle.

Reese: And besides, he had a lot of graduate students who drove cars.

Viney: I think Charles was first. Charles?

Charles Goodman: Yes, in this debate between process theology and free-will theology, if one of the major issues is, "could it be that God didn't create a world?" then a lot of analytic ideas about modality might complement it. One of the things that many people who think about modality, it often occurs to them: okay, so let's try to think about a world with just necessary beings and no contingent beings. How are we going to describe it? What are we going to say about it? So David Lewis, who is always saying that he's very different from process thought, says, there's is really no such thing as the possibility that there could not be a world. That's not a possible world. And a lot of people who don't accept Lewis's concrete world, who have different conceptions of possible worlds, also come to the same conclusion. They think of a possible world as a description of the way things could be. You have all your necessary truths, then you pack up some contingent truths. If you don't have any contingent truths to pack up, then you don't have a world. So if any one of a wide variety of characterizations of what the possibilities are turns out to be right, then process will win over free-will theology without any special theological insight.

Viney: Well, that may be. But it seems to me that those characterizations of modality would have to address the world itself because, clearly, the free-will theist doesn't believe—at least I think a lot of them wouldn't believe—that there is a possibility of nonbeing. That is, God necessarily exists. So there would always necessarily be at least one being. Now, how they interpret that modality is, of course, a good question. But there would always be at least one being. So what you need in this debate, I think, is the impossibility of a nonfinite world.

Goodman: It's funny because think about the numbers. A lot of people think that numbers are necessary beings. So in Lewis's empty world, you would still have vast fields of abstract objects. God isn't exactly an abstract object, but he is, according to conception, not completely spatiotemporal. So that's clearly going to be a contentious issue when you look at the theological conception. It is a good point that you might say, yes, your conception now has God in it, but now you need to describe it. But it may be that claiming God and the numbers and triangles may still not be enough to have real possibility.

Viney: I can also imagine the free-will theist coming back and saying, well, I kind of like Augustine. He sticks the forms in God's mind. All those infinite numbers and stuff, those are all God's thoughts, or something like that. All the necessary beings just get included in God.

Ed Towne: But Hartshorne does say that the statement, "something exists" is a metaphysical statement in the sense that it's necessary. Would that be David Lewis's position?

Goodman: Yes, he would say that "something exists" is necessary.

Robert Kane: I want to get clear about what the connection is here with the free-will and creation *ex nihilo*. These free-will theists want to hang on to creation *ex nihilo*—by the way, I didn't know they were classed as a name. I know most of these people; I didn't know they worked together on this. But many of them, like Hasker and so on, are libertarians about free will. So they don't think that being libertarians about free will, even though it requires indeterminism, necessarily rules out creation *ex nihilo*. Does it really? And what do you mean by creation *ex nihilo*? I have often used an image in graduate classes of creating a swiss-cheese world, so to speak, where you create the world with holes in it, and those holes of course are going to be filled up

by creatures who make free decisions. We'll close them up, so to speak. Is that a conceivable way? Could you create the swiss cheese *ex nihilo*? Not the holes, obviously. Anything that's free fills in the holes, and God wouldn't create that. Is that a conceivable thing? For some reason, they couldn't buy this, according to your take on it.

Viney: I think maybe they could buy that, but in doing so, I think they move away from the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

Kane: But that's the issue. See, that's the issue I'm raising. If that's so, why do you think that?

Viney: Why do I think that goes away from the traditional doctrine?

Kane: Yes.

Viney: Because the traditional doctrine is a doctrine that God sustains the world in being. The free decisions of creatures add nothing to the world. Aquinas says that those are also God's decisions, although God brings them about contingently.

Kane: Well, Aquinas gets himself in trouble in that way, but most of them don't get that specific about the matter. They have a vague idea that God created the world, and we monkey around on our own in creation—it's all rather vague. Aquinas gets in trouble by being very specific about that. Suppose we just left it vague in a swiss cheese way, could we do that? Could they get away with that?

Viney: Yeah, actually I think they could get away with that. I guess I wonder whether it's really creation *ex nihilo* any more. Maybe it's a question of definition. Clearly, with this, we are now co-creators of the world now. We create and God creates.

Kane: I would be interested to know what they would say. I do agree that that would still be a question of co-creation.

Viney: It wouldn't be very easy in the process context, I don't think, for Hartshorne to go that route. I think I skipped a part of the paper where he

talks about how every being has some degree of power, so that the ideal form of power is not this unilateral bringing things about, but ideal power is over other beings with power. And that's one of the things that the free-will theists don't believe in. They believe in completely powerless beings. I guess I agree [with you], and it would be interesting to see what they would say about this. Is this really creation *ex nihilo*?

Kane: They represent an interesting class of people. Between the classical theists and the process theists, it seems to me in the last twenty or thirty years, especially among the analytic philosophers, like many of these people you have mentioned and others—like Bill Alston, for example—have seen some truth in the process view and conceded it, namely, potentiality in God. The fact that when God knows the world, then something is added to God as it progresses and so on and so forth. Then, having admitted that, then they want to back away from the rest of the whole package. I think it's an interesting development, but I think they see that they have to admit some potentiality in God, and I think that any reasonable person thinking about the matter would admit potentiality in God, that God must change in some sense or another, and so on. How far down that road can you go without giving up some of the basic things like creation *ex nihilo*? It's kind of an interesting game they're playing, but I think that creation *ex nihilo* is doomed. That's why I wonder if this view really requires it.

Viney: The very first thing you said was that you didn't know there was a label for this. David Griffin in his book, *Evil Revisited*—one of the big differences between that book and the earlier book, the seventies book on evil and God, is that he explicitly recognizes the free-will theist position, which I think that most of them view as a real moral victory. At least he recognizes them.

Herb Vetter: You had referred to *Man's Vision of God*. You also referred to *Reality as Social Process*. Those are two books that have been very important to me among the Hartshorne corpus. But night before last, he showed me twelve books he has laid out that he considers to be his great books. Neither of these is there! I just wonder, in terms of your own life and thought, which books were particularly important? The other one that I found especially helpful to me was the one Hartshorne did with Bill Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*.

Viney: Yes, that one's a masterpiece.

Bill Reese: Is that among the twelve? [laughter]

Vetter: Yes. [laughter]

Viney: Does Hartshorne even have a copy of *Man's Vision of God*?

Vetter: Yes—well, I think so. He's not sure what happened to *Reality as Social Process*. I understand that only 200 copies of it were actually sold when it came out, but, for some of us, who got copies, it has been very influential.

Viney: Yeah. That's a real curious book. I really like it. But for me, it would have to be *Divine Relativity*. That book was an explosion in my mind. It so neatly puts the case against classical theism. It's just devastating. You can't be a classical theist after you read that book. Well, of course you can. I found the arguments rather convincing.

Blatner: This is an odd question. But could you articulate why people need to hold on to the other theory? What is so attractive about the alternative theory? It's a question in part about theodicy. Is it, as I have been gathering, since this issue of theodicy has been coming up since this morning, is it the real desire to hold onto a really totally omnipotent God, to whom you can then appeal and who can then fix things?

Viney: You know, I think that's a really interesting question because you think of freedom as something positive, as something that people might want, yet the existentialists teach us that we are constantly running away from it, that we find it somehow terrifying. Then on the other hand, you have a guy like Jonathan Edwards, who, if you read his little personal statement about walking out and looking at the stars and looking at thunderstorms, and having this opening, this revelation. At first, he says, I found this concept of an all-manipulative God, a God that does everything. I found this abhorrent, and I tried to find reasons against it as a child. But then as I grew up, and as I looked at nature, I not only had a conviction, he says, I had a sweet conviction of it. I think that's the word he used, something like that. It was

delightful to him to think of this all-determining power. I personally find it very troubling, and I don't know what to do with it.

Lenora Montgomery: I think we are in such a time of enormous transition, or lack of transition, that people are pretty desperate for a solid, fixed something. . . .

Blatner: Could this be the tension between the modern and the postmodern? The idea that there is an out-there truth that is really out there and that we can hold on to, versus one that we are constantly creating through narrative?

Bill Myers: Well, there is a long-standing tradition in the West of being fascinated with the fixed, the stable, the real, the true. John Dewey has shown, perhaps better than anyone, in his critique of the Western tradition, that somehow the real is that which is stable, fixed, absolute, good. And everything else, when we have errors, is just subjective. We just messed up. That's the bad side of things. We inherited this from the Greeks, perhaps? And, certainly, I think that manifests itself in the desire and the want-to-be for the omni-God in the sky.

Montgomery: I was doing a workshop with a small group of people —parents, and parents are the ultimate theologians—and a parent in the back of the room said, finally, in absolute frustration, "I'm raising a child, just tell me what to do!" [laughter]

Kane: Another possible take on it is that these people feel that we just cannot admit that there is anything that is outside the control of God. That somehow or other, if we admit that there is anything outside the control of God, you don't have God. But a truly free decision has to be outside the control of God. It has to be. You have to go down one road or the other, here. You really do. But, I think that's the motivation. If you leave anything outside of the control of God, then there is no hope in the end, and we don't know when or where God is going to be when we need him.